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A BASRELIEF FROM PHALERON.

[PLATE XII.]

A most interesting and beautiful votive-relief, sculptured on both sides, was discovered in 1893, not far from Phaleron, and was briefly described by Mr. Dragatzes in the *Hestia* of June 27th, 1893. It also forms the subject of a paper by Mr. Kavvadias in a late number of the *Ephemeris*.¹ The relief is of such artistic merit and mythological interest that I venture to add a few remarks to the excellent ones already made by the Athenian archæologists. The marble bears on both faces a sculptured relief, and above each, under the crowning pediment, some descriptive inscriptions happily remain. Thus, we are informed that the youth in front of the chariot is Hermes, while the occupants of the chariot itself are Echelos and Basilê, though the present condition of the letters points to *Iasilê*. On the other side we find the dedication: ΕΡΜΗΙ ΚΑΙ ΝΥΜΦΑΙΣΙΝ. Other letters follow, but with the exception of the first five (which I read ΑΛΕΞΟ), they are beyond recognition. Perhaps it was the hexameter: Ἑρμῇ καὶ Νύμφαισιν Ἀλεξὼ ταύτ' ἀνέθηκεν. The Α of ἀνέθηκεν may indeed be distinguished.

As Mr. Kavvadias tells us, we know from the *Etym. Mag.* and from Steph. Byz. that Echelos was hero-eponymous of the Attic deme Echelaidai, and that his name was derived from the marsh (ἐλος) in that deme, between the Peiraieus and the Herakleion, in which latter place the gymnastic games were held during the Panathenaic festival, undoubtedly the ancient hippodrome identified by Curtius, and close to the spot where the monument was found. As to Basilê, we know of her sanctuary between the Athenian theatre and the Ilissos (*CIA*, iv, 53^a; cf. Plat. *Charm.* 153). But, as Kavvadias remarks, we learn most about her from

¹ *Ἐφημερίς Ἀρχαιολογική*, 1893, pls. 9, 10; pp. 109-112.

Diodoros (3.57). Basileia and Rhea were the two eldest daughters of Ouranos and Titaia (or Gê as she was called after death). Basileia excelled all her seventeen brothers and sisters in wisdom and brought them up like a mother, so gaining the name of the Great Mother. After her father's death she received the kingdom by the consent of all, though still a maiden and not wishing to marry. Desirous of leaving a successor, however, she at last married the brother who was dearest to her, Hyperion, by whom she became mother to Helios and Selene. Her brothers thereupon, through jealousy, slew Hyperion and drowned Helios. Selene, in her grief, threw herself from the roof, and Basileia, the mother, in her search for the body along the river, went wild. Helios, however, appeared to her in a vision and bade her cease lamenting, as he and his sister had become immortal and their names had been given by mankind to the sun and moon. His brothers would meet with proper punishment in time. After this dream, Basileia directs all to pay divine honors to her dead children, and forbids any one to touch her body. She then wanders about the world in her madness, playing with the noisy toys of her daughter, frightening everybody with her tympana and cymbals. All take pity on her condition, but on one occasion when some one attempted to touch her, she suddenly disappeared from view in a shower of rain and thunder, and forever after received divine honors, together with her two children. Altars were built to her, and tympana and cymbals were employed in her service.

As Kavvadias remarks, the passage summarized above seems to throw some light on our relief. The fact that Basileia allowed no one to touch her, and that when touched she vanished midst rain and thunder, strikingly reminds us of the rape of Persephone, both myths evidently referring to the disappearance of the summer verdure and the approach of stormy winter. The greatest importance attaches to the version as given by Diodoros, as it certainly seems the prototype of the Eleusinian and Sicilian myths of Korê. Demeter herself (Mother Earth, *i. e.*, Γῆ-Πῆα-Κυβέλη-Βασίλη), according to this older story, is the victim of violence. In the later myth her daughter is substituted in her place, and the mere touch develops into a rape. The scene on the

relief represents an intermediate stage of the myth. Basilê is there being *carried off*, but her abductor is not Hades. He is the youthful Echelos. Who, then, may this Echelos be? If we turn to the Eleusinian legend, we find that Eubouleus, originally an epithet of Hades, afterwards became the name of a youthful swineherd said to have been present at the rape of Persephone. Echelos also, I take it, was originally applied to the infernal deity as the "marsh-dweller," he whose home is below the soft marshes in which men sink to rise no more. The entrance to the lower regions would as naturally be located in the marshes as in the caverns of the earth. Instead, then, of the youthful Korê and the elderly Hades, as in the Eleusinian myth, we have the matronly Basilê carried off by the youthful Hades or Echelos. On the other hand, instead of the mere touching of Basilê and her sudden disappearance from view as in the legend of Diodoros, we have Hades introduced as the ardent and violent abductor, a subject more suitable for the sculptor and artist than the older story. Indeed, it may be that to the sculptor and vase-painter are due the rise and subsequent acceptance of the later myth in preference to the former. But this is mere hypothesis.

Again, before leaving Echelos, I may venture a further suggestion, that this Hades-Echelos may be identical with the Echelos of Pausanias, who alone mentions him as the divine hero, who appeared on the field of Marathon during the great battle and assisted the Greeks (Paus. i. 15-3; i. 32-4). It may be that Pausanias made a slight mistake in the name, or it may be an error of the mss. From the well-known marshes of Marathon, Echelos or Hades, the marsh-occupier, might well have ascended to aid his worshippers and fill his realms with Persian dead. A rumor to that effect once started by the demesmen of Echelaidai would easily find credence at such a time amongst the assembled Athenians.

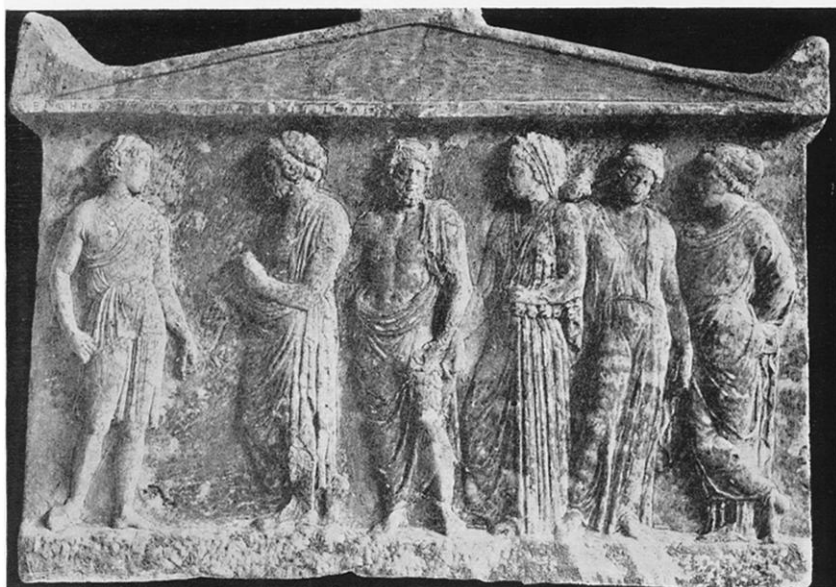
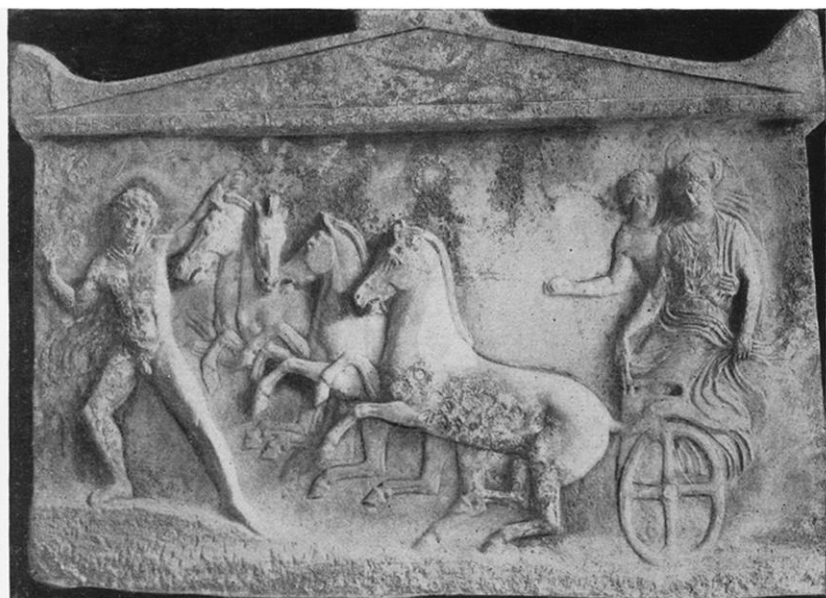
As for Hermes, to whom, along with the nymphs, the votive offering is dedicated, he is most appropriately portrayed in the act of conducting Basilê to the underworld. So also he figures in the Eleusinian form of the myth as conductor of Korê back to earth.

Turning to the other relief, there is little doubt in my own mind that Hermes is here likewise represented in the left-hand

figure. I fail to be convinced by Mr. Kavvadias, in his attempt to identify that figure with Artemis, nor do I recognize a river-god in the bearded personage in front of him, since he has no horns like his companions behind. Mr. Kavvadias sees in the relief a representation of two distinct groups: (1) The Ilissos river and Artemis (*Agrotera* or *Munychia*), and (2) the Kephisos with three nymphs. The scene, to him, allegorically represents the meeting of two cults located respectively on the Kephisos and Ilissos, the site where the marble was found being near the spot where these streams unite their waters. The position of the figures is against such a theory, to say nothing of the want of all connection in idea with the scene on the other side of the votive-slab. To my mind the explanation is rather this: The nymphs, attended by Kephisos, the river-god of Athens (or, it may be, *Achelôus*, who was worshiped at Athens along with the nymphs) and by *Demos* himself, the personification of Athens, are coming to *Hermes* who stands listening to *Demos*, the spokesman of the five. They are naturally enquiring after their abducted *Basilê*, and supplicating for her return. *Hermes* conducted her away and *Hermes* can give her back. The Athenian fields and brooks long for the coming of spring, in other words. In the Eleusinian myth *Korê* had been carried off by *Hades* while she was plucking flowers with her nymph-companions. Here it is the Great Mother *Basilê* whose return is longed for, but Mr. Kavvadias shows us that the Great Mother herself, no less than *Korê*, is frequently associated with the nymphs even in later mythology.

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DOUBLE-FACED RELIEF FROM NEAR PHALERON.